

Lee Wiley – Every Little Things (2019)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)
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01 – *I've Got a Crush on You* 02 – *My Ideal* 03 – *Keepin' out of Mischief Now* 04 – *Stars Fell on Alabama* 05 – *Heat Wave* 06 – *(I Don't Stand A) Ghost of a Chance* 07 – *Someday You'll Be Sorry* 08 – *A Hundred Years from Today* 09 – *Moonstruck* 10 – *How Deep Is the Ocean, How High Is the Sky* 11 – *Oh! Look at Me Now* 12 – *Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans* 13 – *As Time Goes By* 14 – *Some Sunny Day* 15 – *East of the Sun (And West of the Moon)* 16 – *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* 17 – *Fools Fall in Love* 18 – *Blues in My Heart* 19 – *Can't Get out of This Mood* 20 – *Street of Dreams* 21 – *My Melancholy Baby* 22 – *Who Can I Turn To* 23 – *Sometimes I'm Happy* Lee Wiley - vocals
Sidney De Paris - trumpet Vic Dickinson - trombone Ben Webster - tenor saxophone James P. Johnson - piano Arthur Shirley - guitar John Simmons - bass Sidney Catlett - drums

Her husky, surprisingly sensual voice and exquisitely cool readings of pop standards distinguished her singing, but Lee Wiley earns notice as one of the best early jazz singers by recognizing the superiority of American popular song and organizing a set of songs around a common composer or theme -- later popularized as the songbook or concept LP. She was also a songwriter in her own right, and one of the few white vocalists with more respect in the jazz community than the popular one. Even more tragic then, that while dozens of inferior vocalists recorded LPs during the late '50s and '60s, Wiley appeared on record just once between 1957 and her death in 1975.

Wiley was born in 1910 in Ft. Gibson, OK; early press reports claimed lineage from a Cherokee princess, as well as a birthdate five years later than the true one. Whatever her background, she began singing at an early age, influenced by the "race records" of the day by Mildred Bailey and Ethel Waters. She left Oklahoma for New York City as a teenager, and made a few demos in the late '20s before hiring on with Leo Reisman. Her first hit, "Time on My Hands," came in 1931 with Reisman, and earned her solo billing on a few radio programs. Wiley also began recording her own sides for Kapp, backed by the Casa Loma Orchestra, the Dorsey Brothers, and Johnny Green.

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Her popular fortunes fell however, after the threat of tuberculosis kept her from singing for more than a year. In the late '30s, Wiley began recording sides for the Liberty music shop. The results were a series of unique sessions, each organized around the work of one composer (first the Gershwins, then Cole Porter, Rodgers & Hart, and Harold Arlen) and released on the standard catalog album -- four 10" records played at 78 rpm -- for a grand total of eight songs by each composer. These "songbook" recordings also utilized the cream of the era's hot jazz musicians, including Eddie Condon, Bunny Berigan, Pee Wee Russell, Joe Bushkin, Fats Waller, and Jess Stacy; the latter became her husband for several years during the '40s. Wiley also performed often with Stacy's big band and with smaller groups led by Condon during the '40s. She signed to Columbia in 1950 and recorded several additional albums, including the excellent Night in Manhattan.

After recording a single album for Storyville, Wiley had moved again by the mid-'50s, to RCA Victor. Her two albums for the label, 1956's West of the Moon and the following year's A Touch of the Blues, were touching capstones to her career, the first with the delicate arranging of Ralph Burns proving the perfect accompaniment to her voice. Unfortunately, they were practically the last recordings of her career. After 14 years off-record, Wiley returned with one final session, 1971's Back Home Again. She died four years later. ---John Bush, allmusic.com

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